

### **Talking with Your Children About Recent Terrorist Acts**

A catastrophe such as Tuesday's disaster at the World Trade Center and Pentagon IS frightening to both children and adults. These acts of terrorism may challenge a child's basic sense of trust and safety.

#### **Consider these guidelines for children regarding Tuesday's disaster:**

**ACKNOWLEDGE** the frightening parts of the disaster; falsely minimizing the danger will not end a child's concerns.

**REASSURE** children that they are precious to you, and you are taking every precaution to keep them safe. Add that our government is doing everything possible to keep people from being hurt.

**LIMIT** the amount of news coverage young children watch. Ask them what they have seen and heard, and talk to them about it.

**UNDERSTAND** that reactions vary depending on age. Younger children will react to their parents' emotions, and adolescents and teenagers may minimize their concerns or pick arguments.

**ENCOURAGE** children to talk about their feelings of sadness for the people who were killed. Talking about a situation gives children more of a sense of control over their own lives. Emphasize that it is natural to be concerned about the people in New York and Washington, DC, as well as the airplane passengers.

**SUGGEST** that children take some action, even if it's as simple as drawing a picture or writing a brief note and sending it to the [www.viexpo.com/dmstest/america.html](http://www.viexpo.com/dmstest/america.html) to reach out to people affected by the tragedy.

**REMIND** children that people of all races, faiths and ethnic origins have been injured or killed. Be careful not to pinpoint blame or join in hurtful talk about people from other backgrounds.

**GIVE** lots of hugs. Children, regardless of their age, need more of your love and attention during this stressful time.

**Parents should be alert to changes in a child's behavior that may point to a more serious, lasting problem in the wake of Tuesday's terror.**

- Refusal to return to school and "clinging" behavior
- Escalating fear related to the catastrophe and preoccupation with the disaster
- Persistent sleep disturbances such as nightmares, screaming during sleep or bedwetting
- Loss of concentration, decreased school performance
- Irritability
- Startled, jumpy behavior
- Physical complaints (stomachaches, headaches, dizziness) for which no physical cause can be found
- Withdrawal from family and friends

Sometimes, professional advice or treatment may be beneficial for children affected by disaster – particularly those young people who witnessed or been closely exposed to destruction, injury or death. Parents who are concerned about their children should seek professional guidance.

The GIC offers Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Benefits as a resource to all agencies at no cost to the individual. These services are provided by United Behavioral Health. All state employees can access critical incident debriefing services on site at your agency. Additionally, managers and supervisors can receive confidential consultations and resource recommendations for dealing with employee issues such as low morale, stress management, disruptive workplace behavior, mental illness, and substance abuse; managers and supervisors can obtain EAP Services for their agency by calling 781-768-2277. Individuals seeking one-on-one counseling should call their HMO; indemnity and PPO plan members call United Behavioral Health 1-888-610-9039.